



5-Year Plan (2006 to 2011) (1/17/06)

Franklin Conservation District

For More Information Contact:

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Organization of the Franklin Conservation District

A political subdivision of the State of Washington – authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

Function of the Franklin Conservation District

To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

We Serve & Why

The citizens of Franklin County to enhance economically and improve the quality of the community

Mission of the Franklin Conservation District: (revised 1.17.06)

- *The Franklin Conservation District promotes the education, conservation, and wise use of natural resources by providing technical and financial assistance to natural resource users.*
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Vision of the Franklin Conservation District

- Keep farmers farming
 - The importance of agriculture to the Tri-City area is recognized
 - Decreasing nitrate levels in ground water
 - Perennial wheat will become economically viable
 - Farmers in our district our using monitoring and soil testing on every Franklin CD field
 - Make growers aware of Franklin CD and all of them using our services
 - Keep a viable (well funded) conservation program in Franklin County
 - Continued education program in the schools
 - More adoption of GPS technology
 - The WSCC will continue to help fund CDs
 - Importance of agriculture to Franklin County is known within the CD
 - Continued use and operation of the Snake River Dams
 - Ability to use saved water resources – water bank type & incentive system in place
 - Water conservation activities in urban areas through education
 - Reduce wind erosion
 - Increased organic matter – especially in sandy soils
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Values of the Franklin Conservation District

- Honesty
 - Integrity
 - Conservation ethic
 - Service to growers
 - Customer service
 - Care about people we serve
 - Technically sound work
 - Economically feasible solutions – healthy economics
 - Good working environment
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Natural Resource Priorities and Goals:

1. Water Quantity
2. Water Quality

3. Wind Erosion
 4. Soil Quality
 5. Wildlife Habitat (including public access)
- Education (included in all above)
 - District Operations (for addressing priority natural resource issues)
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Critical Geographic Areas:

- Southeast Franklin CD (south of Eltopia, north of Pasco, West of Smith Canyon)
 - Livestock operations (needing assistance)
 - Southwest Franklin CD (west of 395, south of Sagehill road, South to Pasco)
 - PM10 Area (east of 395, Juniper Dunes, Eltopia, NE corner of county)
 - White Bluff area
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Information – Education Priorities and Goals:

Education (included in all strategies) - By January 17, 2011 95% of the population of the district will have awareness of FCD services offered, every school will participate in the “Salmon in the Classroom” program, will have a stable funding source for education programs, the WSCC will have educated the statewide population of what CDs are.

Strategies:

- Host conservation training seminars with local media
- Develop public service announcements with TV, newspaper, radio
- Advertise our web site and keep current
- Secure funding for “Salmon in the Classroom” program
- WSCC to hire a Public Affairs Specialist
- Select key audiences to reach and the methodology
- WACD to establish a public relations committee
- WSCC and WACD provide leadership training seminar on public relations
- Maintain the K-12 existing public education program
- Consider a conservation tour / legislative tour BBQ for key decision makers and citizens
- Build the relationships through outreach
- Consider newsletter on website
- Formalize support from teachers we already reach

Actions:

1. Seeking funding for education activities
2. Letters of support from teachers, students, school boards (Pasco and N. Franklin) and farmers supporting the education programs and annexation & assessment of Pasco into the FCD
3. Contact local media regarding developing a relationship and development of a conservation media day (eg. Capitol Press, KVEW, KEPR, KNDU, public TV, NPR, KONA)

Key Decision Makers:

- City councils
- City managers
- School boards
- Public works director
- Benton / Franklin Health Department
- Teachers
- Superintendents
- Curriculum directors
- WEA

- Ag Teachers
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District Operations Priorities, Goals:

District Operations - By January 17, 2011 will have our own facility, City of Pasco & Kahlotus annexed into the CD and assessed, utilized three new funding sources not previously used, and stable funding to support district goals, activities and mission, staffing with benefit package.

Strategies:

- Develop a competitive proposal to present to USDA agencies
- Build relationships with the two cities leaders
- Develop a benefits package campaign with talking points – ie education for quad cities water right and cities
- Convince the two cities to annex
- Do an active search for funding sources (IRS section 170 a1b)
- Lobby for increase in basic funding for conservation districts

Actions:

1. complete an analysis of raising assessment
2. develop the campaign package for annexation
3. take proposal to the key decision makers

Key Decision Makers:

- City Councils
- City Managers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Farm organizations
- School boards

Organizational Improvement:

- Increase the recruitment for Supervisors
 - Look at change in CD law to provide funding for time spent
 - Work with WACD District Operations Committee on recommendations to revise RCW 89.08
 - Clearly define the CD identity – different than NRCS – create opportunities to increase exposure for CD – rent a billboard, get border signs -- “Conservation District – the local people’s voice for conservation”
 - Construct news releases and media ads -- getting exposure and identity of what the CD does
 - Contact the 2 New Mexico CDs on outreach program ideas
 - Look at revenue generating activities – fee for products
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Trends Impacting Conservation in the Franklin Conservation District

- Funding is decreasing – with emphasis on Salmon
- Loss of importance of ground water quality
- Getting harder to farm
- Cost of production increasing
- Urbanization of rural areas
- Global economy – less expensive for farming to occur overseas
- Nationalization of farm bill conservation incentives
- Lack of understanding in urban areas
- Lack of young farmers willing to come back to farm
- Less farmers – bigger farms
- Loss of political clout from farming sector
- State becoming Puget – Centric
- West side illogic

- Regulations and laws increasing
- Increase in federal funding for conservation

Strategies to Address Trends

Water Quantity - By January, 2011 have ability and authorization to utilize saved water, irrigation water management expanded to 50% irrigated lands, reduced rill irrigated ground to 1%.

Strategies:

- Convince west side legislators and key environmental groups of the value of using the saved water for additional beneficial uses including irrigation
- Update the ruling of water assignments for use of saved water
- Develop incentives for saving and using water – look at the Oregon example
- Continue EQIP cost share program – high priority
- Seek funding through BPA for irrigation efficiency
- Educate water users on the benefits of water saving and how they could use the water for beneficial uses
- Look at putting GWMA back into the federal budget each year
- Go to growers meetings and tell them about water selling opportunities – incentives

Actions:

1. Host a legislative action day on water conservation / savings / incentives awareness.
2. Participate in grower meetings to explore water savings / use / incentives concepts & provide information about CD (presentation).
3. Develop a proposal for water savings / use / incentives

Key Decision Makers:

- Irrigators
- County Commissioners
- Irrigation District Board
- State legislators and their staff
- Washington Environmental Council
- Greater Columbia Development League
- Tribes
- Commodity Groups
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Water Quality - By January, 2011 nitrate will have shown a downward trend in 3 consecutive years, % of wells exceeding 10 mg/l reduced by 10%, 50,000 acres under nutrient management system, 50% of the farms are under Irrigation Water Management (IWM)

Strategies:

- Secure cost share and technical assistance funding
- Education for the farmers, fertilizer companies, and local decision makers
- Point to the economics of fertilizer use
- Continue monitoring ground water resources
- Change NRCS policies on EQIP for IWM to allow annual contracts in a critical area

Actions:

1. continue partnerships with other CDs and GWMA regarding funding for cost share and incentives
2. continue the current monitoring program
3. apply for funding from other sources for water quality related activities

Key Decision Makers:

- Ecology
- BPA

- EPA
- Legislators
- Irrigators
- Environmental groups
- Tribes
- Coalitions of commodity groups
- County Commissioners
- Local citizens effected

Wind Erosion - By January 17, 2011 every farm in the dryland portion of Franklin CD meet the soil loss tolerance level "T", 120,000 acres remaining in CRP – maintained as per the contract, no major "blows" in the irrigated ground, 25,000 acres in conservation tillage.

Strategies:

- Work with local land managers to develop an incentive program
- Reestablish the conservation priority areas in the state
- Utilize the NACD Ag Lands Committee for influence
- Work with Members of Congress and staff
- Conservation tillage demonstration plots
- Work with researchers on perennial wheat project studies
- Work with PNNL on research activities on carbon sequestration and carbon credit strategy
- Work with PNW Direct Seed Association regarding economic break-even practices
- Work with Cooperative Extension at Experiment Station for research

Actions:

1. Convince LWG to place a funding pool for wind erosion areas
2. Work toward increasing mulch till farmers sign-up to 50% participation
3. write to Governor for assistance in solving an important safety and natural resource issue
4. contact local road department and irrigation district for problem areas

Key Decision Makers:

- Governor
- Local Working Group members
- Land managers
- EPA
- County Commissioners
- Irrigation district staff

Soil Quality - By January 17, 2011 NRCS will recognize local conditions of soil organic matter levels in arid regions that effect conservation program participation, 50% of our farmers will understand soil condition index (SCI) and know how to improve SCI, 10,000 acres with increased use of compost for building soil quality

Strategies:

- Develop a commercial compost facility in Franklin County – intercept compost headed to port
- Educate the growers on SCI
- Work with fertilizer companies to assist with education of producers
- Have WACD, state associations, NACD, Western Governors Association with policy changes in the 2007 Farm Bill – utilize graphs, and data sets to demonstrate need
- Increase use of cover crops

Actions:

1. Make available to growers the RUSLE II program available on the web – education activity
2. apply for funding for a compost demonstration
3. compare the data on SCI to other watersheds in the area – CO, OR, ID – work with NRCS agronomists

Key Decision Makers:

- Benton/Franklin Health District
- WSU Cooperative Extension
- NRCS state and area agronomists
- Media contacts & celebrities
- USDA leaders – eg Bruce Knight

Wildlife Habitat (including public access) - By January 17, 2011 have 120,000 acres remaining in CRP – maintained as per the contract, pheasant population increased by 10% each year, increased public access to wildlife viewing facilities including Juniper Dunes trail developed and maintained (multi-agency cooperation).

Strategies:

- Develop an incentive program concept
- Contact Coyote Ridge regarding growing pheasants
- Develop a habitat program for circle corners
- Explore hunting club concept with interested growers
- Partner with other organizations – Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Elk Foundation,
- Explore Partners in Wildlife
- Explore access to Juniper Dunes

Actions:

1. Invite a WA Fish & Wildlife person about possibilities
2. Facilitate a conversation with interest groups on Juniper Dunes access.
3. send a representative to the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife decision making meetings

Key Decision Makers:

- WA Fish & Wildlife
- BLM
- Franklin County Commissioners and Road Dept
- Steve DeRuyter

Natural Resource Data in the county of 809,422 acres:

- *Cultivated Cropland* - 486,836
- *Irrigated Cropland* – 247,926
- *Dry Cropland* - 238,910
- *Rangeland* - 202,356
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- *Public Land* - 99,000
- *Private land* - 710,442

Staffing Needs

- District Manager
 - Bookkeeper
 - Technical Positions (minimum of 2 – 3 – up to 4 positions)
 - Nutrient management, irrigation water management, wind erosion control, GIS specialist, Web specialist
 - Education Specialists (2 positions)
 - Public Relations Position (outreach)
 - Grants Manager
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Annual Budget Needs: Estimated at \$1.5 million

Key Decision Makers: Listed above with strategies.

Priority Actions: Listed above with strategies.

Statements of Intent (Measurable Goals):

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Conservation District "Niche"

- Education for conservation – existing and future programs
- Irrigation water management and ground water assistance
- Education on market activities / opportunities
- Smaller operators assistance within urban growth areas
- Sustainable agriculture and organic farmers assistance
- Ability to assist the land managers navigate/integrate the laws, rules, regulations
- To help mediate the differences of opinion when it comes to programs (eg NRCS)

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices